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Theocracy Alert

Busted at “Justice Sunday II”: Political lies and ecological disasters

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August 23, 2005—Organized by the Family Research Council and cosponsored by Focus on the Family, the much ballyhooed Justice Sunday II was... a bust.

To be sure, there was the usual megalomaniacal rhetoric from James Dobson who yet again railed against “unelected, unaccountable, and arrogant” judges who didn’t rule as he told them to. Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council chimed in with his brand of absurdity when he played the victim card and claimed, “They’ve said that our children don’t have a right to pray.”

Many of the other speakers also played the victim card, just as pathetically as Perkins. The American Prospect’s Rob Garver took note of that theme in his [article](#), “‘Megachurch’ Madness: The persecution of Christians in America and other themes of ‘Justice Sunday II’”:

In the imaginary world painted by the leaders of “Justice Sunday II,” conservative Christian Republicans may control the White House, the Congress, and several seats on the Supreme Court, but they remain oppressed and victimized. Speakers invoked Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and Susan B. Anthony, all in service of the meme that Christians in America are being silenced, persecuted, and prevented from practicing their religion.

Even the “friendly” bloggers the Family Research Council brought in—[at its expense](#)—to cover the event acknowledged the fiasco.

Ed Morrissey of Captain’s Quarters [reported](#):

Cathy Cleaver Ruse [of the Family Research Council] also notes that courts have ‘enshrined homosexual activity’ as a constitutional right. I know I’m puzzled; is she arguing that we should outlaw homosexuality? If so, that’s pretty darned dumb. ... Footstomping [sic] over what two consenting unrelated adults do in a bedroom in terms of its legality plays into the worst stereotypes of this kind of rally. ... However sympathetic I am to the main message, I have some reservations about the secondary messages. As a Christian, I also have some reservations about staging this in a church.

Beth Woodfin of [Yeah Right Whatever](#) duly worried that the JS II speakers were “hitting every single ‘negative’ stereotype out there” especially when it came to gay Americans, a tactic that brought into focus the “Christian” speakers’ own depraved bigotry and hatred.

Joe Carter of Evangelical Outpost [yawned](#), “For many evangelicals, Justice Sunday II was a familiar song reinterpreted in an unfamiliar way. Some of the notes were in harmony with the gospel, others were discordant, and a few merely fell flat.”

Leon H. of [RedState](#) summarized what many thought after the event: “While the message of democracy through legislation is one that appeals to the center, it was presented in a format that almost certainly missed the center entirely. ... I came away from this event puzzled a little by the point of it all.”

The point of it all was that Justice Sunday II had no real point, but it did make one: the radical fanatical leaders of the evangelical Christian Right are alienating more and more people of faith and social conscience. It would seem they didn't have that many to work with in the first place, according to a new report by the Barna Group.

Barna's website [answers](#) the question “What is The Barna Group, Ltd.?”:

Through its five divisions, The Barna Group provides primary research (The Barna Research Group); communications tools (BarnaFilms); printed resources (BarnaBooks); leadership development for young people (The Josiah Corps); and church facilitation and enhancement (Transformation Church Network). The ultimate aim of the firm is to partner with Christian ministries and individuals to be a catalyst in moral and spiritual transformation in the United States. It accomplishes these outcomes by providing vision, information, evaluation and resources through a network of intimate partnerships. Among its strategic partners are Church Communication Network, EMI Christian Music Group, Filmdisc, HollywoodJesus.com, Kingdom Inc., and Tyndale House Publishers.

Despite their “ultimate aim,” Barna reports are generally objective and blunt. They often expose the hypocrisy and dirty underwear the leaders of the Christian Right keep tucked away out of public view. For example, in a [report](#), entitled “Born Again Christians Just As Likely to Divorce As Are Non-Christians,” issued September 8, 2004—during the height of the pre-election campaign to “save traditional marriage”—Barna confirmed that “among married born again Christians, 35 percent have experienced a divorce. That figure is identical to the outcome among married adults who are not born again: 35 percent.” They also documented that “nearly one-quarter of the married ‘born agains’ (23 percent) get divorced two or more times.”

Their latest [report](#) documents that only one in six surveyed base their morality on the Bible; 32 percent said that morality is always determined by the situation; 33 percent indicated they don't know if moral truth is absolute or relative. According to Barna, “the maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample is ± 3.2 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.”

As for the “biblical worldview” that Tom DeLay, George W. Bush, Rick Santorum *et al* champion as the only legitimate guide for civil laws and the leaders of the Christian claim must be everyone's personal view, the Barna survey showed the percentage of adults holding a biblical worldview has remained “minimal and unchanged over the past three years” at about 5 percent. The “biblical worldview” was defined as:

someone [who] believe[s] that absolute moral truth exists; that the source of moral truth is the Bible; that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches; that eternal spiritual salvation cannot be earned; that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth; that every person has a responsibility to share their religious beliefs with others; that Satan is a living force, not just a symbol of evil; and that God is the all-knowing, all-powerful maker of the universe who still rules that creation today.

But perhaps the most reassuring result reported by Barna was that half of the adults surveyed said they made moral choices “on the basis of specific principles or standards they believe in.”

“Principles and standards” like civil equality, marital monogamy and supporting families? It would seem so. Americans are slowly but surely expressing those principles, standards and beliefs. According to the new Pew Research Center for People and the Press/Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life [poll](#):

Today, 36 percent of Americans favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry, up from 32 percent in December 2004. The percentage favoring gay civil unions has risen as well. Currently, 53 percent favor allowing gays and lesbians to enter into legal arrangements providing them with many of the same rights as married couples; that compares with 48 percent last August.

There is no logical, ethical, pragmatic, or moral reason to bar same-sex couples from committing to each other and society by entering into a civil marriage. Period.

“But the Bible says...” is the usual first thing heard in response to that statement. As has been pointed out innumerable times, “the Bible” says a lot of things that no civilized person believes or practices, and Yeshua himself had nothing—that’s *nothing*—to say about homosexuality. If one is going to follow Old Testament laws, then there are going to be a lot of murdered people in the streets as commanded by Leviticus and Deuteronomy. And if one is going to adhere to what early church fathers said, then women should not be allowed to vote or to speak unless spoken to since they are the reason for “the fall,” as the apostle Paul made clear in the First Timothy when he admonished Christians “suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” because, as Paul stated, “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.”

But there are other reasons the leaders of the Christian Right who selectively read the Bible for their own political purposes are alienating more and more people of faith and social conscience.

A few days after Justice Sunday II antigay crusader James Dobson and Focus on the Family launched an [attack](#) on Christianity Today magazine. The reason was Andy Crouch’s [article](#), “Environmental Wager,” that urged Christians to become concerned about and active in fighting global warming. Dobson and FOF believe global warming is “junk science,” despite the fact that virtually every reputable scientist in the world supports the idea. It’s hard not to, given the overwhelming [evidence](#). But Dobson’s bible-based environmental science is not new.

On October 8, 2004 Dobson and FOF issued their “[Must Read Election Message](#)”:

Three Focus on the Family executives—including founder and chairman Dr. James C. Dobson—have signed on to an open letter to the American people stressing the importance of relying on biblical values in selecting candidates on Election Day.

The sixth item on their list read, in part:

Natural resources: God put human beings on the earth to “subdue it” and to “have dominion” over the animals (Gen. 1:28). ... The Bible does not view “untouched nature” as the ideal state of the earth, but expects human beings to develop and use the earth’s resources wisely for mankind’s needs (Gen. 1:28; 2:15; 9:3; 1 Tim. 4:4). ... We believe the ethical choice is for candidates who will allow resources to be developed ...

What Dobson and FOF were less than subtlety advocating was opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other currently protected areas to exploitation by the oil industry George W. Bush was part of and is still indebted to. In other words, continue (and increase) current levels of industrial pollution and the resulting destruction of the planet’s ecosystems that are leading to increased global warming, actions that those American and international scientists not gagged or ignored by the Bush administration assure humanity is a global disaster in the making. From a New York Times editorial, October 31, 2004:

The Bush administration’s well-deserved reputation for tailoring scientific information to fit its political agenda was reinforced last week when James Hansen, the government’s pre-eminent climatologist, said that he had been instructed by Sean O’Keefe, administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, not to discuss publicly the human contribution to global warming. The charge came as part of a broader indictment, delivered in a speech in Iowa, of the administration’s refusal to confront the

consequences of climate change or to do anything meaningful about reducing the industrial emissions that contribute to it.

Theocratic capitalism at its devastating worst. And the rape goes on, as a recent New York Times [editorial](#) pointed out: “The White House has given the industry no reason to consider restraint. Its energy policy is based entirely on expansion, extraction and consumption, with little thought for conservation or the environment.”

One of their latest efforts involves Valle Vidal, a part of the Carson National Forest in northern New Mexico, which the Bush administration and the energy industry want opened to coal-bed methane development. The “Yellowstone of the southern Rockies” was given to the nation by Pennzoil in 1982 on condition it be managed as a wildlife habitat. It is currently home to the largest elk herd in New Mexico. But who cares? As Dobson and Bush believe, “God put human beings on the earth to ‘subdue it’ and to ‘have dominion’ over the animals.”

It seems the leaders of the Christian Right and their political minions are not content with destroying America’s promise of equality and justice for all citizens. Their jaundiced biblical worldview demands the Earth and its inhabitants be destroyed as well.

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